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ABSTRACT

This study examines the roles of freedom and play in creativity instruction. A trial operation of a creativity training program is described including a workshop with 18 sixth- and eighth-grade students. The program emphasizes three basic concepts: freedom, playfulness and warm interpersonal relationships. Group activities and dramatic techniques are used in the program. Implications are that substantial freedom and play increase the effectiveness of instructional materials and techniques. Also, understanding the creative thinking processes could be enhanced by further research in this area. (Author/MPJ)

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Freedom and Play in Creativity Instruction[1]

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Creativity research and development is typically directed toward defining, describing, and assessing creative behavior as a cognitive function and developing and evaluating instructional materials to teach it. Very little attention has been paid to affective functions. However, work by Torrance (1965, 1970b), Wallach and Kogan (1965), and Getzels and Jackson (1962), suggests that besides the cognitive aspects of creativity, affectivity may be involved in creative thinking and that affective components of creative thinking should be developed in training programs. The purpose of the present paper is to review the rationale for a creativity training program which involves several kinds of affective activities, to describe a trial operation of the program, and to present preliminary evaluations of it. Three basic concepts were emphasized in the new program: freedom, playfulness, and warm interpersonal relationships. Group activities and dramatic techniques were used to foster these concepts The program involved no instructional materials, but was instead an attempt to specify general instructor and student behaviors.

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THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This review of the theoretical background will be focused on research and theory related to the concepts of freedom, playfulness, warm interpersonal relations, group activities, and dramatic techniques in creativity training.

Freedom. The importance of freedom in creative thinking is stressed by several researchers (Torrance, 1965, 1970a, Rogers, 1969, and Moustakas, 1967). Torrance (1965, 1970b) suggested that two kinds of freedom are necessary ingredients of a creative atmosphere: freedom from threat of evaluation and freedom from inhibiting sets. In his own research he found that external evaluation is threatening, that it tends to block awareness of certain areas of experience, and that it reduces a person's ability to think beyond the obvious, the safe, and the familiar. Rogers (1969) also emphasized the importance of freedom from threat of evaluation. He asserted that creativity can be fostered by the establishment of psychological safety and freedom, that is, by accepting the individual as one of unconditional worth and providing him with a climate free of external evaluation. Moustakas (1967) also supported the notion of freedom from inhibiting sets. He suggested (p. 6) that "by forcing a person to behave according to (someone else's) values and convictions, we impair his creativity and his will to explore and actualize."

Playfulness. Playfulness, defined by Lieberman (1967) as social and cognitive spontaneity, manifest joy, and sense of humor, has

also been found to be related to divergent thinking (Torrance, 1970b, Wallach and Kogan, 1965, and Lieberman, 1967). In his own work with children in the classroom, Torrance (1970b) found that creativity, even in a very serious problem solving situation, is facilitated by occasional regression, by laughing, by being childlike and dependent, and by fantasizing. One of his published sets of instructional material, Sounds and Images (Cunnington and Torrance, 1965; Torrance, 1970b) is written with an invitation to regress, to have fun, and to laugh. Playfulness here seems to have a dual purpose in fostering creative thinking. Besides reducing the stresses of evaluation, it also encourages a kind of "playing with ideas." "Playing with ideas" may involve pushing and pulling at the limits of concepts, looking for new and different relationships, and breaking out of inhibiting sets.

Work by Kubie (1958) offered still another theoretical basis for the importance of playfulness in creative thinking. From anecdotal evidence he concluded that creativity occurs largely at the "preconscious" level and that thinking can be truly flexible only on a "preconscious" basis where it is unhampered by the rigidity of consciousness. The importance of the subconscious in creative thinking is also evident in Kris's (1952) concept of "regression in the service of ego," which stressed the use of primitive modes of thinking in beginning phases of the creative process. Playfulness, regressing to childlike behavior, acting silly or fantasizing may be ways of allowing a whole range of subconscious ideas to be expressed.

Maslow (1962) also suggested that creativity was rooted in the subconscious. He asserted that one of the prerequisites of creativity was the ability to dip into the subconscious and to accept one's own impulses and primary processes without fear or concern for social approval. Playfulness is also important in the expression of these impulses and primary processes. Maslow (1959) pointed out that the creative person is able to regress without fear, to have fun and be humorous, to be silly or to be whimsical or fantastic. The creative person has an uninhibited expressiveness and spontaneity typical of happy, secure children.

Wallach and Kogan (1965) also stressed the importance of deemphasizing evaluation and encouraging playfulness. They suggested (p. 301) that playing with ideas ... may be involved in the production of many associates and of a large number which are unique." In line with their belief in the importance of playfulness in fostering creative thinking, they devised creativity testing procedures which maximized freedom, playfulness, and rapport between examiner and examinees. These testing procedures yielded measures of creativity which were highly correlated among themselves and uncorrelated with intelligence.

In research with gifted and creative students Getzels and Jackson (1962) found many instances where a sense of playfulness was more evident in the behavior of highly creative students than in the behavior of their less creative peers. For example, they found an abundance of humor in the fantasy and other free responses of highly creative students. They also found that highly creative students

were more acceptant, more expressive of impulses, and that they had a greater ability to "toy with ideas" than less creative students. Also characteristic of the highly creative students was a greater tendency to diverge from typical behavior patterns and to risk behaving in new and unusual ways.

Warm interpersonal relations. The importance of warm interpersonal relationships in encouraging creativity was stressed in Torrance's (1965, 1970) work with children. He concluded that one of the most important conditions for creative growth is for the pupil to feel that the teacher is on his side. He stressed the importance of a teacher "really caring, rather than just seeming to care," and the importance of communicating this feeling to the pupil. Moustakas (1967) also argued that a person can experience his own uniqueness and creative potential only when he knows that he is deeply cared for, respected, and accepted without qualification.

Group activities. Group work probably affords the best opportunity to foster the three conditions of freedom, playfulness, and warm interpersonal relations. Several researchers have suggested techniques for developing creative thinking through group activities. One example is Osborn's brainstorming techniques (1963). This involves a group attempt to generate large numbers of ideas by encouraging a rapid contribution of first thoughts and wild ideas and building on the ideas of others - leap frogging - in an atmosphere

free of criticism. The importance of group work in fostering creative thinking has also been the subject of recent research by Torrance. In one of his studies (1970a) he found that there were advantages in small group instruction over individual instruction in developing certain creative skills such as question asking. Torrance also found that there tended to be an inverse relationship between numbers of questions asked and group size. Small groups think of more questions than larger ones. Other research by Torrance (1969) also showed that children are more willing to "tackle" difficult tasks when working in pairs or small groups than when they are alone or before an entire class.

Dramatic Techniques. Role playing is still another technique which may be useful in fostering both creative thinking and affectivity (Torrance 1970b). Perhaps in seemingly abandoning one's own logical and conscious processes and assuming the personal processess of another person, the typical constraints on one's own thinking are removed and there is greater freedom to allow any, or all ideas to surface in the alternate person portrayed. The fact that role playing is a "spontaneous technique" where participants act freely rather than from script may also be important in allowing for expression of subconscious processes.

In a discussion of the rationale of roleplaying, Corsini, (1961) suggested that by acting out roles different from their own and by

seeing a single problem acted out in several ways, participants in role playing may learn to adopt broader points of view and to consider alternative approaches to problems. Because of its emphasis on personal behavior and interaction, role playing is also well designed to promote affective behavior. Role playing also affords participants an opportunity to express their own unique individuality.

PROCEDURE

This brief review suggests that in the development of a creativity training program particular emphasis should be placed on fostering an atmosphere of freedom, playfulness, and warmth and that group activities and dramatic techniques provide an excellent vehicle for developing the atmosphere. These were the major guidelines which were used in developing the program described in this paper.

Participants. The participants were fifth and seventh grade children from four schools in Tippecanoe County, Indiana. Scores on the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking and school records of intelligence measures were the basis for selecting participants for the workshop. Four subtests (asking questions, unusual uses, product improvement, and just suppose) of form A of the Torrance test were administered to children in two fifth grade and three seventh grade classes in Tippecanoe County, Indiana. Scores were available for 41 fifth graders and 79 seventh graders. The originality score was used as the selection criterion. The scores were arranged in order and the twelve high and twelve low scorers at each grade

level were tentitively selected. (Extremely high and low IQ children were excluded). These children were then invited to participate in a creativity training workshop. Conflicts with other summer plans reduced the final group to a total of sixteen children, 4 fifth grade low scorers, 2 fifth grade high scorers, 5 seventh grade low scorers, 3 seventh grade high scorers, and two other children for whom no pretest scores were available. The latter two children were friends of other regular participants. They expressed an interest in participating and were invited to participate. They were sixth and seventh graders.

Physical arrangements of the workshop. We met two afternoons a week for six weeks during the summer in the television production studio on Purdue's campus. The studio was chosen as a meeting place because it afforded ample space for group and dramatic activities. Its general mystique as well as the abundance of "props" also encouraged exploratory behavior and acting out of feelings and attitudes. The studio was arranged so that we had the option of meeting in a formal classroom setting with desks in rows, a blackboard and big teacher's desk or informally on a rug on the floor in the studio.

Content or subject matter. The content theme of our sessions was "school". We encouraged the children to think about teachers and all the aspects of instruction and social activity in school. We particularly wanted them to look for new ideas for improving school to make it a place where children would learn more and have more fun.

Observation techniques. In an effort to collect comprehensive data on the behavior characteristics and reactions of the children, the final six sessions were recorded in their entirety on video tape. A professional crew of director, engineer, and three cameramen carried out the taping. We instructed them to focus the camera on the centers of activity but also to study individual children as much as possible. To help the children overcome any camera consciousness we encouraged them to get to know the production crew and to view themselves in playback. In a short time the children showed no concern about the cameras.

Methods of Working With The Children

Freedom. In order to create an atmosphere of near total freedom we did a number of things. To begin with we let the children dress anyway they wished, including bare feet. At the beginning we announced that they would be completely free, even not to come if they lost interest. We encouraged them to express their feelings about us or anything we were doing at anytime. We let them move about whenever they wanted to explore the studio, to desert group activities, and to talk out whenever they wished. Special attempts were also made to avoid negative evaluations among students or between the leaders and students. Ample opportunity for role playing also provided a special kind of freedom in that it allowed the children to express their ideas through the guise of another person.

Playfulness. When the children realized that they were free to express themselves as they wished, fun and humor and silliness and goofing came naturally. Our joining with them in their playfulness was supportive of those behaviors. Role playing and charades also created much humor. Finally, seeing themselves in video playback also created much sense of fun and humor. They managed to be genuinely funny and humorous without offending or hurting one another.

Warmth. Creating an atmosphere of warmth and close interpersonal relationships was difficult at first, because the children who came to our sessions expected a traditional teacher-student relationship. The goal was accomplished, however, by sitting on the floor together and talking with them in informal sessions, walking together about campus, abandoning the use of titles for a first name only basis, and, in general, showing genuine concern about and interest in each member of the group.

Group activity. Group discussions and dramatic techniques were our main methods of working with the children. We often worked with the whole group of sixteen in a general kind of "rap session" or in an attempt to generate many ideas. Much time was also spent in small groups. Here our work generally involved two to four children who were engaged in planning skits, role playing, or charades for presentation to the whole group. Sometimes children were

asked to work in groups which we specified and other times groups were established according to their own preferences. But regardless of size or method of selection, group work always progressed under the condition that criticism of one another's ideas was taboo, and leap frogging on one another's ideas was encouraged. Some of the children seemed to be quite inhibited at first, but by the third week most of them talked quite freely.

Role playing. Role playing was used a great deal, and it proved to be a particularly useful technique. Through role playing the children found the greatest freedom to express feelings and ideas and to generate new ideas. Actually, the role playing often began as a kind of group problem solving task since three or four children would typically be involved in a role playing group. They would plan the roles to be acted out and consider various approaches. Furthermore, in acting out the roles several alternatives would even be tried. For example, several children role played a teacher-student relationship where the student was unjustly accused of cheating. In one case both the student and teacher were portrayed as aggressively, but illogically, defensive about their respective positions with the teacher's repeated line being, "You cheated," followed by a frustrated student response, "I did not." However, when the students saw the absurdity of this teacher behavior, even though it realistically represented the experience of several children, several of them asked to "try it

another way." They wanted also to portray good teacher behavior. They first gave evidence that the student actually cheated and then made the teacher more receptive to the student's explanations.

Evaluation. Throughout the six weeks we kept an anecdotal record of our work. During the last three weeks the sessions were recorded on video tape. We reviewed these video tapes after each session. We also kept discussing our effort, our successes, and our failures. Finally, at the end of the six weeks we sifted through all of our video tape to try to pick out the essential events and to organize them into a representation of what we were trying to do and of how it came out. This resulted in a composite video tape which also served as a vehicle of evaluation. Finally, an alternate form of the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking was administered to all the children. It should be noted that several recent studies of the Torrance Tests (Harvey et.al., 1970; Covington, 1971; and Wallach, 1968) indicate that the tests are of only modest validity and reliability at best.

RESULTS

Anecdotal records. One of the first major observations we made of the behavior and characteristics of the children came during the second session when they were asked to generate lists of ideas about what should be changed about school. Many of their ideas

1. This video tape, thirty minutes in length, is available from the Purdue TV Production Unit.

were concerned with ways to allow more time to be together in social activities as in student lounges and longer recesses, but they also suggested that teachers should be more open and friendly. Much talk centered on the need for mutual respect between teachers and students. Ideas for less teacher talk and more group discussions were highly supported. Several students liked the notion of having older students teach younger ones and of working together on problems in small groups. The genral consensus was that school should be fun. Their inclination to goof around and act silly in our sessions also convinced us that they would like to have this same opportunity in school.

Reactions of children and parents. About two months after the closing of the workshop, both the children and their parents were invited to view the composite video tape of our work with the children during the summer. Eleven children and 21 parents attended the session. Children and parents alike were then asked to present their feeling via an anonymous questionaire, about the importance of the major themes of our work and the techniques we used, as well as the possibility of their implementation in the public school system. In general, responses to the questionaires showed the children to be supportive of more freedom and openness in the classroom while parents were genuinely hesitant or nonsupportive of such notions.

When asked about the importance of freedom in a learning situation all of the children saw a need for much more freedom than was

presently permitted in their classrooms, though they still saw some need for basic rules. Many of them mentioned again the need for more freedom to move about the classroom, to talk to their friends and ask questions, and to do what they wanted when their work was finished. The children were slightly more hesitant about the importance of being able to act silly in school. One child thought that discipline was more important than being able to act silly but the rest saw a need for some silliness and goofing. Remarks like, "We shouldn't have to act like good kids all of the time," were common. With regard to the question of fun and humor in the classroom, one child said, "not in <u>every</u> class" meaning that it was not possible in some classes but all of the children welcomed the idea of more humor and fun in school. With the exception of one child who was afraid that "teachers would play favorites," all of the children wanted closer interpersonal relationships with both students and teachers. The children were particularly anxious to have more class discussions, especially small group discussions, and they seemed to like the informality of sitting on the floor although they realized its inconvenience for some activities. Role playing to all of them was "fun" and "exciting."

Of the twenty-one parents who responded, five were totally against freedom in the classroom; the remaining sixteen accepted the notion of freedom hesitantly and with rather stringent limitations and qualifications. Fear that the "students couldn't use it well,"

and a general feeling for the importance of discipline were common reasons given for their preference of greater control in the classroom. Responses like "school is a place to learn and not show off" were typical parental reactions to the importance of allowing children to act silly. Eight parents said there should be no silliness or goofing; twelve said it should be allowed "only at specified times and places"; only one parent said children should be allowed to act silly. Parental reactions were much more positive to the idea of warmer interpersonal relationships in the classroom; only two mentioned the dangers involved in their becoming "too close." Nearly all of the parents saw possibilities for the use of role playing and open class discussions. They were more hesitant though, about holding class on the floor. Four parents thought classes should not be held on the floor. They feared that the teacher might lose control. Thirteen parents saw it as possible "in some situations," "in some classes," or "to break the monotony."

Torrance test results. In an effort to assess the effect the program had on the children's creative growth, the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking, Form B, were administered at the end of the six weeks. Gain or loss scores from pretest to posttest are presented in Table 1. (As was noted earlier, the Torrance Tests are of such a low level of reliability and validity that these change scores must be viewed with the utmost caution and as potentially highly unreliable). Since the samples were not randomly selected no

tests of significance were applied. Furthermore, since the children were selected on the basis of extremely high or low pretest scores, regression effects would be extremely likely. In any event the test results show that 6 children gained in fluency with a mean gain of 9.00, 7 children decreased in fluency with a mean loss of 9.43, and one child made no change. For flexibility, 8 children gained with a mean gain of 3.63, 5 children lost with a mean loss of 4.80 and one child made no change. Six children gained in originality with a mean gain of 11.33 and 8 children lost in originality with a mean loss of 14.50, Overall gaines or losses were: fluency .86, flexibility .36 and originality -3.42.

A comparison of these scores might lead to the conclusion that this program accomplished little in developing the creativity of its participants, or perhaps that it was helpful to most of the children who begin with low creative ability, but a detriment to those who begin high. However, a more logical explanation for the results is probably the regression effect. Since extreme groups were chosen in the beginning, regression can be expected to obscure the effect of treatment. Another plausible hypothesis might be that some of the children were too relaxed as a result of the training program and did not perform up to their full potential. Wallach and Kogan (1965) found that children who reported a moderate degree of anxiety, rather than very low anxiety, performed better on creative thinking tasks. It may be that some of the children felt so completely unthreatened by

the test as a result of the training, that they did not work hard at producing responses within the time limits and the directions imposed by the Torrance Tests.

CONCLUSIONS

From all of this experience and from the other types of evaluation presented earlier, we formulated a set of general conclusions.

First, and foremost we conclude that we survived quite well. We came out of the sessions unscathed psychologically or physically, even though we started as novices in this kind of learning situation in which total freedom prevails. We entered into this with great trepedation because we had not done this sort of thing before and because we feared that complete freedom might breed utter chaos. But it did not. The children remained relatively orderly and close to us and seemed to enjoy the sessions.

Second, it became great fun. The kids were funny and productive. And it was fun to see them do their "thing", to open up, and to begin to generate ideas.

Third, we and the children experienced some discomfort about the freedom and the attendant lack of direction during the first few weeks. We felt that we should be "working" and producing "something." There was also a feeling that work and fun are really not compatible. But as time went along we seemed to get over these feelings.

Fourth, we saw individual children open up and begin to express themselves more openly and freely during this brief regimen of creative freedom. The test results do not really reveal how individual children gradually became able to express their ideas more freely and to create new ideas. The Torrance Tests are scored normatively, that is, by reference to the performance of norm groups. But the unfolding of individual children seemed to be an intensely personal thing, undoubtedly dependent on each one's personal background and experience.

Fifth, working with children in this manner fostered warm interpersonal relationships between us and them and among them. These personal relationships afforded a richly rewarding effect, added to the pleasure of working together, and reduced anxiety among all of us. Use of first names also brought us closer together.

Sixth, and finally, we conclude that we have just scratched the surface and that we have much more to do in our effort to understand creative behavior, how it develops, and how to teach it. Above all, it remains to be shown that worthwhile learning occurred in these sessions. Our major concern, at this stage, was to develop a system for working with the children in ways which we hoped would be productive of creative thinking. The limited results from the Torrance Tests offer no conclusive evidence. Better methods of assessment will be needed after further trials of the program.

Table 1

IQ and Gain and Loss Scores

on Creativity Tests

Child	Sex	Pretest Level	IQ	Fluency	Flexibility	Originality
1	F	L	106	12	8	2
2	F	L	103	4	4	18
3	M	L	100	-15	-8	-23
4	M	L	94	4	1	6
5	F	L	87	17	-3	-2
6	F	L	101	10	4	24
7	F	L	90	7	7	11
8	F	L	107	-3	2	7
9	M	L	88	0	1	-13
10	M	H	124	-6	-3	-15
11	F	H	113	-3	2	-7
12	F	H	102	-16	-5	-41
13	F	H	101	-11	0	-10
14	F	H	122	-12	-5	-5
15	F	*				
16	F	*				
Mean Gain				9.00	3.43	11.33
Mean Loss				9.43	4.80	14.50
Net mean gain or loss				.86	.36	-3.42

*Pretest scores were not available for these children.

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